To improve its financial condition, Air India is taking steps to intensify marketing efforts, augment capacity, reduce non-operating costs and to improve its product, image and on time performance.

[Translation]

Pig Iron Plants

3088. SHRI RADHA MOHAN SINGH : Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) the names of Pig iron plants operating in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar at present, separately;

(b) whether the Government propose to set up such more plants in public and private sectos in the above States;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA) : (a) as per available information, pig iron units operating in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar are M/s. Malvika Steel Limited, M/s Nagpur Alloy Castings Limited and M/s. Usha Martin Industries Limited respectively.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

(d) Under the new industrial policy intrepreneurs are free to set up pig iron plants anywhere in the country subject to certain locational restrictions.

Increase in the Production Cost of Iron

3089. SHRI NITISH KUMAR :
SHRI SURENDRA YADAV :

Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether attention of the Government has been drawn towards the newsitem published in '*Hindustan Times*' dated December 28, 1996 under caption "Mini Steel Plants on verge of closure";

(b) if so, whether due to recent price rise many small steel units in the country are on the verge of closure;

(c) if not, the reaction of the Government in this regard; and

(d) the estimated increase in the production cost of iron due to increase in prices of coal, petroleum products electricity and rail freight from December, 1995?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA) : (a) Yes Sir.

(b) and (c) Cost of power is an important element in cost of production of steel through electric Arc Furnace and Induction furnace routes which are highly power intensive. Therefore, recent price hike in power tariffs by some States has affected the performance of these sectors.

(d) The increase in prices of Coal, petroleum products, electricity and rail freight from December, 1995 has increased the cost of production of pig iron and sponge iron in the country. However, it is difficult to estimate the impact on the cost of production as it depends on various factors such as the type of product, technology, location etc.

Telephone Connections in Bihar

3090. SHRI DEVI BUX SINGH : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the gap between the demand and supply for new telephone connections in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, the biggest States of the country;

(b) whether the Government have set any target in this regard;

(c) if so, the details of steps being taken to achieve the target;

(d) whether the demand for new connection is increasing in these States; and

(e) if so, the steps being taken to meet this demand and the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) The demand and supply for new telephone connections in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh are given in the enclosed Statement.

(b) Yes, Sir. The Department has set targets for providing new telephone connections during the year 1996-97 :

Bihar	-	47000
Uttar Pradesh	-	155000

Also, it is proposed to clear the waiting list upto 31.3.97 progressively during 1997-98.

(c) Necessary equipments and funds for providing telephone lines have been allotted by the Government to all the Telecom Circles and the equipments have started reaching the sites. It is expected that the targets set for 1996-97 would be fully met. Action has been initiated for providing necessary equipments and materials for the year 1997-98.

(d) Yes, Sir. Demand growth rate has increased from 12.46% for the year 1994-95 to an average of 16.32 for the three years (94-97) for Bihar and from 14.62% to 18.77% for Uttar Pradesh during the same period.